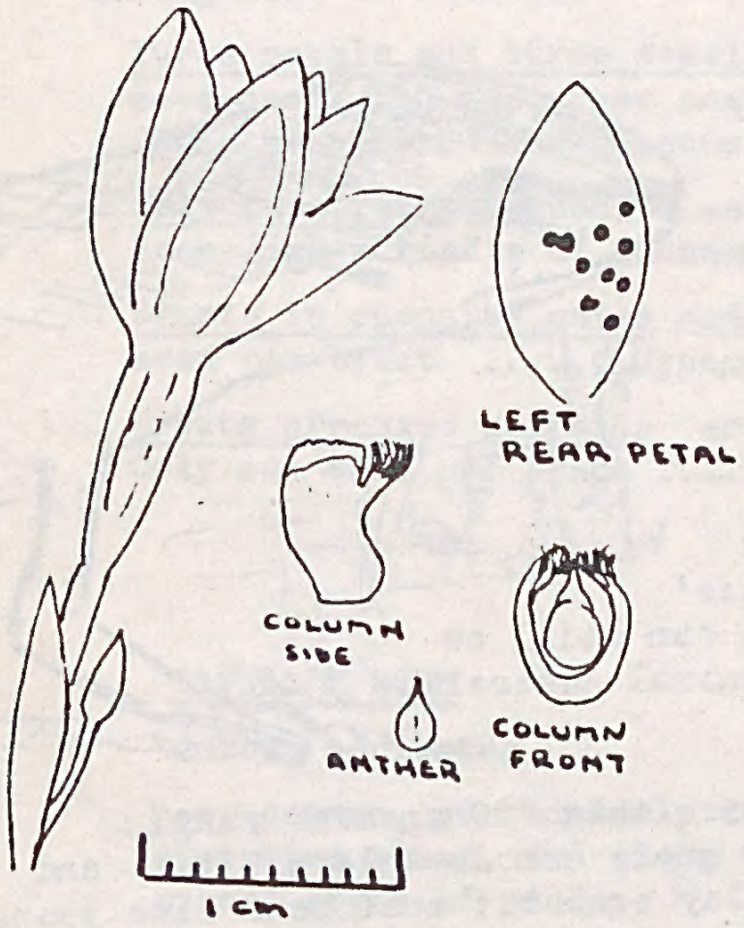
CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

NOVEMBER '83 85

Calochilus robertsonii
'Purplish Beard Orchid'

A NEW ORCHID RECORD FOR CASTLEMAINE? E. Perkins



Thelymitra decora

The sketch shows a Sun-orchid found growing near the old prison farm at Muckleford.

At first sight, because of the distinct dark spots on the rear petals, it looked to be the Spotted Sun-orchid (Thelymitra ixioides). The column is however, quite different to the column in the Spotted Sun-orchid. The column has tufts of pink hairs, and the top of the column is cut off, more or less square. The top of the column is slightly warty but there are no other appendages.

It has a dark blue colour, much darker than the Scented Sun-orchids found in the area.

The description of Thelymitra decora in Black's "Flora of South Australia" agrees quite well with this orchid, except

- the deep blue colour (magenta-blue in Black)
- the pink hair tufts (white in the South Aust species)

However, Nichols has several drawings under the name Thelymitra ixioides var truncata. He shows pink hair tufts and one form as deep blue.

The orchid has also been known as Thelymitra truncata (after the "cut-off" column top. However, none of these names are included in Cliff Beauglehole's lists, and I do not know of the current status of the orchid.

Willis lists it for Maryborough, Gisborne district and the Brisbane Ranges as well as other Victorian and South Australian localities.

AUSTRALIAN LIZARDS

By Terry Collins
(Adapted from 'Overlander' Magazine)

Over sixty percent of Australian reptiles are of the lizard family SAURIA. Five of the worlds sixteen families are represented in Australia. All are non-venemous, there being only two venemous Lizards in the world and both these are found in arid Central America. The range of size is vast, from the smallest adult 20 - 30 mm in length to the giant goannas or monitors reaching nearly 5 metres long. Our longest is the 'Perentie' which reaches nearly 3 metres and can still be found in the gibber regions of Central Australia.

SCINCIDAE (Skinks)

This the biggest family with more than 200 species ranging from 3 cm to over 60 cm, occupying every concievable habitat and many are very specialized. Some lay eggs but most bear live young i.e. are vivaparous. Most can drop their tails when threatened (autonomy), the wriggling tail acting as a decoy to the predator. There are 20 genera of skinks reflecting the diversity of body forms. The very small skinks such as little 'drop-tails' are often found near habitation. They feed mainly on small insects and similar prey. Most have four fully formed limbs and are found in almost every habitat especially around ground vegetation, small shrubs, small rocks and bark.

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THE DIMINUTIVE RUSHES AND SEDGES

by E.P.

About half a dozen of the tiny rushes and sedges are quite common arouhd Castlemaine. Because they are so small, most naturalists disregard them. This is a pity, because they are easily recognised and are quite interesting.

Almost any damp area will have some growing, but the best places to look are the damp mud flats. In these places you should be able to find most of them. Sometimes they form a carpet of plants.

The flowers None of the plants have brightly coloured flowers; the flower parts are green or straw-coloured or brown.
The rushes (Juncus) has more or less regular petals and sepals. In the other plants, the flowers are surrounded by modified leaves that are called bracts.

If you look at the flowers with a hand lens you will see the arrangement of flowers.

Three petals and three sepals often surrounding the seed case. The seed case contains many small seeds These are the rushes (Juncus)

Only two bracts, opposite each other. The seeds look like a bundle of sausages ...Centolepis

Bracts in opposite pairs and with only one seed per bract ..... Cyperus and Aphelia

Bracts arranged spirally and not in opposite pairs. Only one seed per bract .... Schoenus and Scirpus.

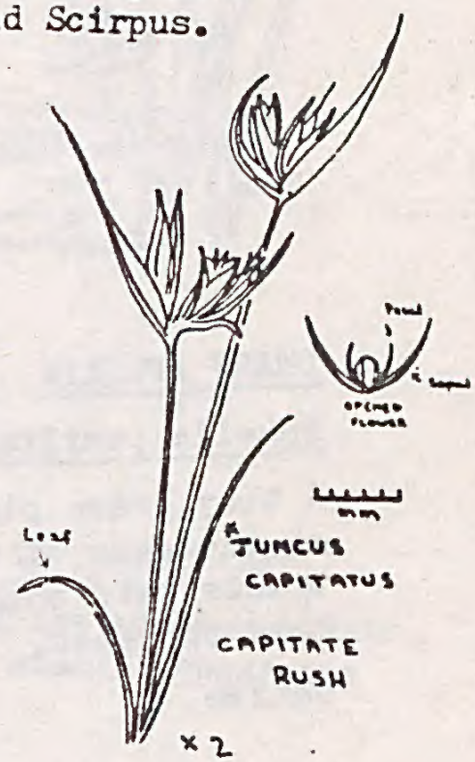
CAPITATE RUSH

*Juncus capitatus

Very common, particularly in disturbed areas, and along the gravel edges of roads.

Green when young but soon becomes red-brown in colour.

Introduced.



TOAD RUSH

Juncus bufonis

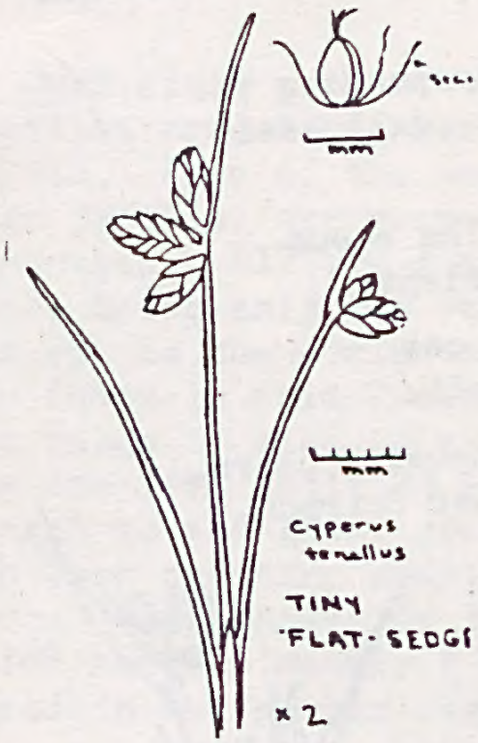
Toad rush is widespread and common.

It may be only a few centimetres high but is usually bigger than this. In good conditions it will grow to 10 or 15 cm.

Toad rush is often light green and has branched stems. Often it forms a dense "lawn" along muddy gullies.

Occasionally it can be found as a garden weed.

Native.



TINY FLAT-SEDGE

Cyperus tenellus

This is easily recognised by the flowers apparently growing sideways from the stalk.

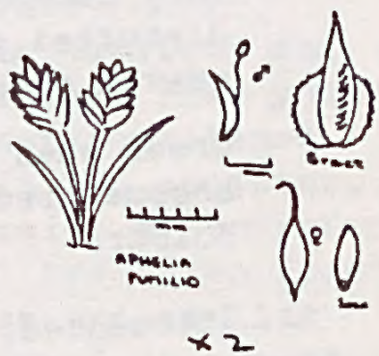
When young the flower bracts are green but they become straw coloured as the plant grows older.

Usually there are dozens of flower stalks gowing from a small tuft.

Native.

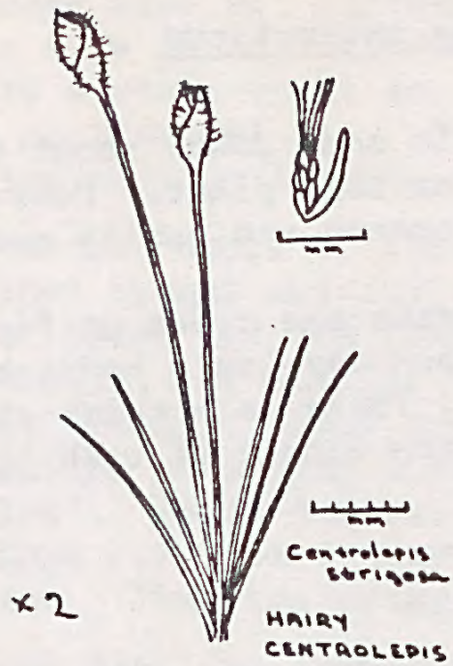
DWARF APHELIA

Aphelia pumilio



A tiny green plant with the flowers at the ends of the stalks. Some bracts have anthers and other bracts have the seed.

Native.



HAIRY CENTROLEPIS

Centrolepis strigosa

Hairy centrolepis is one of the most common plants in the district and can be found by the thousand in damp areas.

The two bracts resemble a crab's claws, and the copious hairs give it a most distinctive furry look.

The plant is much less tufted than the flat-sedge.

Native.

POINTED CENTROLEPIS

Centrolepis aristata

The pointed centolepis is much rarer than the hairy centrolepis.

The two are easily distinguished; in this species the bracts are much longer and hairless.

Like the hairy centrolepis, the tufts are quite small with few flower stalks.

Native.

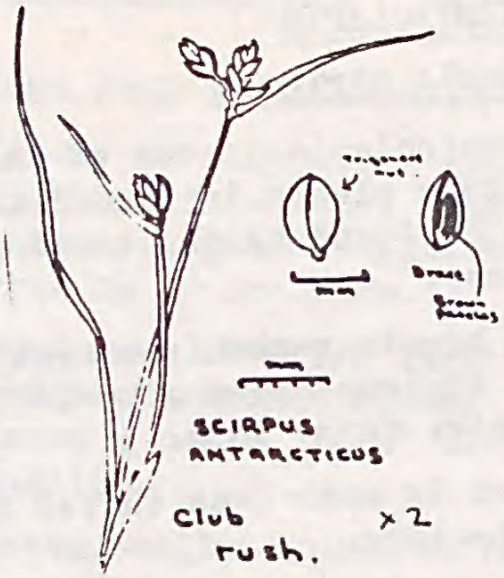
AWNED CLUB-RUSH

Scirpus hystrix

Awned club-rush is rather rare

It is green, and the pointed bracts give a distincive starry appearence

Native.



CLUB RUSH

Scirpus antarcticus

There is some doubt about the correct name for this plant. However, it is quite common and easily recognised.

The bracts are green at first but very soon develop a reddish-brown patch. There is a thick green vein along the middle of each bract.

Native.

COMMON BOG-RUSH

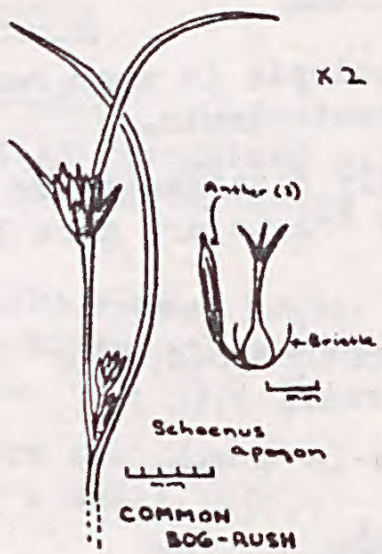
Schoenus apogon

The bracts are quite a dark, shiny brown, to make this plant quite easily recognisable.

It may be quite small, but in good conditions can grow to 10 centimetres or even a little more.

In some areas it forms dense patches.

Native.



Happy hunting!
Next time you come to a damp mud flat, stop to look for some of these fascinating little plants.

MORE NAME CHANGES To make life difficult !

Musky caladenia changed from Caladenia angustata to C. gracilis.
Scented sun-orchid is now Thelymitra nuda. Previous names have included T. chasmogama, T. longifolia and T. aristata.
Globe sun-orchid is now Thelymitra X-chasmogama

E.P.

The same size but different body form are the burrowing skinks, the main type being called 'Lerista'. They are small, long and thin with a sharp snout to aid burrowing. Most have small limbs or even no limbs at all. These modifications allow easy burrowing in the soil just below the surface or in the leaf litter.

The next in order of size contains several genera of fast, streamlined skinks usually found around low vegetation. Best known of these are the Striped Skinks (Ctenotus) found throughout Australia. Of similar to slightly larger size are the 'Ergernia' family. Some are burrowers like ' Ergernia inornata', which utilise a complex burrow system with numerous escape, or 'pop-holes'. These can usually be found around bushes in sandy soil. Look for lizard tracks near the entrance for signs of occupation. They are often active near dusk.

The rock dwelling Ergernias are common in rock habitats throughout Australia. Though some have smooth scales, typically the scales are spiny to help wedge the animal in rock crevices. These are often communal animals with several specimens living together in a single crevice. Communal droppings may be a clue to the lizards' presence. In arid areas the most common of these lizards is the Stokes Skink, Ergernia stokesii, while in the temperate areas and eastern regions Cunningham's Skink, Ergernia Cunninghami , is common. The smaller grey to black and smoother scaled tree skink, Ergernia striolata, is common in rock crevices and on trees in much of the eastern half. There are many other Ergernia species including Australia's largest skink, the Land Mullet, Ergernia major, which may reach nearly 70 cm in length.

One of the best known Australian skinks is the Bluetongue, genus 'Tiliqua'. Again, this genus is Australia wide. In southern and eastern areas the Common Bluetongue and its close cousin the Blotched Bluetongue are frequently encountered in metropolitan areas, where they feed on snails and vegetable matter. In more arid areas there is the Western Bluetongue, arlarge lizard with triangular head, broad blue tongue and short legs typical of all bluetongues. This lizard, Tiliqua occipitalis is usually covered in a series of loose, broad stripes, alternating sandy colour with a dark brown to black. You will find it moving around on the ground, even crossing roads.

In keeping with the diversity of skinks some bluetongues don't have blue tongues. Such is the case with the Pink Tongued Skink, Tiliqua gerrardii, a large lizard found along the eastern seaboard, usually in rainforest areas. Though principallyground dwelling it does climb vegetation and has a prehensile tail; a feature not shared by any other Australian lizard. Like other

bluetongues it gives birth to fully formed young, up to 25 at a time. Concidering the size of the young compared to the mother, this is a conciderable feat. Some bluetongues are quite small and elongated like the Leristas, and may be found under vegetation such as spinifex by gently turning up one edge of the bush.

Similar to the bluetonges in body form, but stockier, with very large, rough scales is the Sleepy Lizard or Stumpy Tail, Trachydosaurus rugosus. It is a frequent pedestrian on outback roads, especially in Spring.

There are many other fascinating skinks far too numerous to mention. to be continued.

Club Programme

Meetings

November Friday 11 - Reserves and the Castlemaine District. Speaker, Mr Geoff Gerdsen, Lands Department Officer, High School, Lawson Pde.
Thursday 24 - Business meeting, Ed. Centre.

December Friday 9. Christmas Breakup. Members and Visitors Night

Outings Saturday 12 - Mt Franklin North. Maryborough Club has been invited to Join us. Leave S.E.C. at 1.30 pm sharp.

General Meetings start at 8pm with the rooms opening about 20 minutes before that. Supper afterwards, but some more mugs would be handy.
Business Meetings start at 7.30. If you have a matter to raise, please come along. The meeting is open to all members.

Committee

President	Mr G. Broadway	Ph 72 2513
Hon Sec	Mrs S Bruton	Ph 72 3050
Treasurer	Mr F. Meyer	Ph 72 1958
Editor	Mrs R Mills	-

Articles for the Magazine may be left at Tonks Bros 224 Barker St

Spring, 1983

I think that my special memories of this spring will be of-
a beautiful, deep crimson spider orchid,
a haze of purple chocolate lil ies,
hundreds of deep pink Caledenias,
and a rocky slope with a glowing mixture of Bulbine lilies, Milkmaids, Chocolate lilies and Waxlip orchids. Ed.